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**TRANSFORMATION OF POLITICAL REGIMES IN UKRAINE
AND RUSSIA IN THE CONTEXT OF DEMOCRACY
BUILDING AND CONSOLIDATION OF AUTHORITARIANISM**

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to identify the differences in political development between Ukraine and Russia to understand the factors behind the departure from democratic traditions. The methods employed included content analysis of the media and statistical analysis of survey data. The findings of the study revealed that the demand for democracy in Ukraine was greater than in Russia, as almost 43% of Ukrainians expressed absolute confidence in the significance of democracy, while only 23% of Russians did. It was found that the period of 1994-2007 in Ukraine was characterised by both attempts to introduce authoritarian aspects into the life of the state and the peak of the increase in civil

liberties and political rights after the Orange Revolution. At the same time, Russia experienced a complete authoritarian breakdown, especially after the 2003 parliamentary elections, where the United Russia party won two-thirds of the seats, including through administrative resources. The development of civil society organisations was also highlighted as an aspect of political regime formation. Their overall sustainability in both Ukraine and Russia was stagnant in 2005-2014. However, after the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014, the resilience of Ukrainian civil society organisations has considerably improved, while in Russia it has declined, as the study findings showed. Thus, the post-independence period of both countries did not have substantial differences. The findings of this study can be used in shaping political strategies and educational programmes in the field of international relations.

KEYWORDS: Civil Society – Parliamentary Opposition – Change of Power – Public Control – Suppression of Freedom of Thought

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1. Introduction

The subject of transformation of political regimes is one of the fundamental issues in contemporary political studies, especially considering the active development of democracy and the considerable number of authoritarian regimes. The scientific discourse on this issue is significant because of the constant evolution of the political factor in the globalised world and the significance of transformation for the stability, security, and well-being of societies. On the one hand, democratisation is a process of gradual institutionalisation of political freedoms, equality, civil society, etc., which increases the level of human rights protection. On the other hand, the tendency to strengthen authoritarianism is a challenge for both small democratic states and the international political system overall.

The subject of political development of Ukraine and Russia is extremely relevant in the current context, as both countries had a part of common history within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), but in 1991-2024 had completely different vectors of political development. Society in Ukraine, both historically and since gaining independence, has sought to establish democratic

values and has been consciously moving towards European integration. However, Russian society, considering the specific historical features of its development, focused on consolidating authoritarianism and a regime that consistently destroyed or transformed democratic institutions in its own way.¹ Therefore, the study of the transformation processes in Ukraine and Russia is critically significant in terms of understanding how radically different political strategies affect stability, the development of international relations, and the strengthening of positions in the international arena, which is especially relevant after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

An additional significant aspect in the study of this subject is the role of international cooperation in the context of supporting democratic and resisting totalitarian or authoritarian regimes. The strengthening of authoritarian regimes can be a grave concern for democratic states, leading to sanctions, diplomatic isolation, etc.² Therewith, democratic governments, by virtue of their beliefs and international legal obligations, can receive extensive financial, political, and military support from analogous political regimes, which demonstrates the significance of democracy as a factor in the development of international relations. Therefore, the study of political regime transformation allows understanding why some governments fall into deep isolation, while others embark on new democratic transformations. Finally, the investigation of the transformation of political regimes in Ukraine and Russia is essential for predicting the development of the geopolitical situation in Eastern Europe. The success of Ukraine's democratic transformation can serve as a prominent example for other post-Soviet countries seeking to break away from their authoritarian legacy.³ At the same time, further consolidation of authoritarianism in Russia could lead to increased threats to international security and stability. Therefore, understanding these processes is significant not only for researchers, but also for politicians, civil society, and international

1 O. SEMENENKO, V. ONOFRIICHUK, P. TOLOK, V. RIEZNIK, D. MOMOT, *Analysis of Ukraine's external military-economic relations during the war with Russia*, in *Scientific Bulletin of Mukachevo State University. Series "Economics"*, 2024, 11(1), pp. 71-82.

2 T. PANFILOVA, *Lessons of consolidation processes of Ukrainian community of Western Ukraine in the first quarter of the XX century*, in *Democratic Governance*, 2022, 15(1), pp. 42-56.

3 L. MIKHNEVYCH, N. ILNYTSKA, K. ILIKCHIEVA, Y. RYZHUK, *Legal Guarantees and Judicial Protection of Human Rights in the Post-Soviet States and the Countries of the North Atlantic Alliance in the 21st Century*, in *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*, 2023, 15(2), pp. 131-146.

organisations seeking to ensure peace and prosperity in the world.

One of the key issues is the specific features of the political system in Ukraine after 24 February 2022. Kobets⁴ explored this issue. Specifically, the processes of political governance were defined in a series of laws of Ukraine. Therewith, the political process in Ukraine is characterised by destructive elements, including corruption, lack of transparency, lack of competent civil servants, imperfect mechanisms of political and administrative control, etc. Another significant aspect in the context of the development of a democratic system is the organisation of political consciousness in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Considering the above, Venger and Postol⁵ addressed the formation of political consciousness in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Specifically, it is political consciousness that affects the democratisation of society and is an essential and necessary condition for it. In addition, the development of political consciousness in society helps citizens to become more aware, take a greater part in the processes within the state, make decisions, and influence a series of processes. Furthermore, the regime transformations in Ukraine since independence require a thorough investigation. Such a study was conducted by Pashkov and Khomeriki⁶ for the period from the declaration of Ukraine's independence to 2019. Specifically, the researchers emphasised that the trajectory of Ukraine's political development is moving in a circle, accompanied by alternating periods of democratisation and authoritarian regressions. Therewith, the political regime in Ukraine in the 1990s was an unconsolidated authoritarianism, which, however, was not fully completed for a series of reasons.

Furthermore, political development in terms of the change of political elites is a problem. Bushev⁷ studied this issue, noting that the political transformation in Russia took place in two stages: the period of formation of quasi-demo-

4 Y. KOBETS, *The political system of Ukraine under martial law: Problems of efficiency*, in *Bulletin of the Precarpathian University. Series: Political Science*, 2024, 16(1), pp. 27–33.

5 O. VENGER, O. POSTOL, *The formation of political consciousness in the conditions of a full-scale Russian–Ukrainian war*, in *Humanities Studies*, 2023, 93(16), pp. 95–102.

6 V. PASHKOV, O. KHOMERIKI, *Political transformations in Ukraine (1991–2019): Running in a circle on the way to democracy*, in *Bulletin of Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University Series Philosophy Philosophies of Law Political Science Sociology*, 2023, 1(56).

7 M. BUSHEV, *From decentralization to centralization: The history of the usurpation of political power in Russia (1991–2008)*, in *Bulletin of Lviv University. Series Philosophy-Political Studies*, 2023, 48, pp. 214–219.

cracy during the presidency of Boris Yeltsin and the total centralisation of power during the first two presidential terms of Vladimir Putin. The centralisation itself was accompanied by an increase in the influence of law enforcement agencies, changes in political institutions, subordination of the media, etc. The above also includes the problem of distinguishing the specific features of the political regime. Parkhomenko⁸ addressed this subject, noting that the political-legal regime in Russia has a series of features that allow characterising it as such that was transformed from the USSR regime and in modern conditions has both totalitarian and democratic features with a bias towards strengthening the classical totalitarian features. The factors that point to this include the consolidation of power in the hands of a single person, the absence of civil society, the right to opposition, or an independent court, etc. Denishchenko⁹ added such features as the cult of personality, militarism, and totalitarianism designed to unite lands through hybrid operations, which together constitute “Ruscism”.

A rollback of democratic values is often accompanied by a ban on political parties. Kozminykh¹⁰ studied this issue. Specifically, the researcher investigated the process of banning political parties before and after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. While before Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine this could only be achieved through the courts, during martial law the ban on certain political parties is an easier procedure, as it is conducted by administrative rather than judicial decision. The democratic or authoritarian tendencies in internal politics are also influenced by the individuals in power.¹¹ Trebin¹² analysed this issue in his study of Russia’s internal and foreign affairs, noting that many of the “ruling elite” climbed to the top through racketeering, raiding, contract killings, etc. That is why, instead of a multi-party system, the “guiding and directing force” of Russian society and the core of the political system is the United Russia party.

8 N. PARKHOMENKO, *The state regime of the Russian Federation: Some political and legal dimensions*, in *Philosophical and Methodological Problems of Law*, 2022, 23(1), pp. 50–56.

9 D. V. DENISHCHENKO, *Armed violence in the post-Soviet political space as an attribute of Russian ideology*, in *Politikus*, 2023, 5, pp. 31–40.

10 A. V. KOZMINYKH, *International and national “standards” for banning political parties under martial law*, in *Politikus*, 2024, 1, pp. 43–48.

11 E. SHAHINI, E. SHAHINI, *The Economic and Political Legacy of Trump's First Term: Implications for the Second Presidency*, in *Politics and Policy*, 2025, 53(5), article no. e70066.

12 M. TREBIN, *Usual ruscism: General characteristics*, in *Bulletin of Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University Series Philosophy Philosophies of Law Political Science Sociology*, 2022, 4(55), pp. 143–157.

According to the analysis of modern research, the role of volunteer organisations after 24 February 2022 requires additional attention. The effectiveness of reforms during the war and the role of the media in shaping attitudes towards the current government were also relevant for this study. Considering the above, the purpose of the study was to identify the key factors that influenced the development of state-building institutions in Ukraine and Russia. The objectives of the study were to review the party system, the dynamics of civil society organisations, and to determine the role of democracy in societies according to opinion polls.

2. Materials and methods

The study was based on statistical information from the non-governmental organisation Freedom House.¹³ Survey data from respondents in Ukraine and Russia were the subject of the World Values Survey¹⁴ on the website of the organisation of the same name. Furthermore, the World Values Survey^{15,16,17} was used to understand the cross-cultural differences and similarities between the societies of Ukraine and Russia. A publication by Radio Liberty explored aspects of the Ukrainian lands becoming part of the USSR in the context of preserving the church in Ukraine.¹⁸ The study also used survey data from the analytical company TNS MMI¹⁹ on the number of supporters of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), the Moscow Patriarchate (MP), and the Kyiv Patriarchate (KP).

13 Freedom House, *Country and territory ratings and statuses, 1973–2024*, 2025. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>

14 World Values Survey, *Online Data Analysis*, 2025. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

15 World Values Survey, *WVS Cultural Map: 2023 Version Released*, 2023. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSNewsShow.jsp?ID=467>

16 C. WELZEL, R. INGLEHART, F. DEUTSCH, *Social capital, voluntary associations and collective action: Which aspects of social capital have the greatest 'civic' payoff?*, in *Journal of Civil Society*, 2006, 1(2), pp. 121–146.

17 R. F. INGLEHART, *Cultural evolution: People's motivations are changing, and reshaping the world*, Cambridge University Press, 2018.

18 H. BILORUSETS, *Soviet crimes in western Ukraine in 1939–1941: Imprisonment, torture, executions and deportation*. 2022. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/srsr-represiyi-tortury-deportatsiya/32036952.html>

19 New survey: 60% of UOC-KP and 24% of UOC-MP supporters in Ukraine, 2016. <https://www.religion.in.ua/news/vazhlivo/33672-nove-doslidzhennya-v-ukrayini-60-prixilnikiv-upc-kp-ta-24-upc-mp.html>

In the context of the development of the authoritarian regime in Russia, the content analysis method was employed to examine Radio Liberty's publications on the White House shooting²⁰ and the 2003 elections²¹ to state bodies. Court cases, including the Yukos case²² and the lawsuit²³ filed by the Republican Party of Russia with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), were also thoroughly analysed. Furthermore, the elements of military censorship in Russia after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 were investigated.²⁴ For a better understanding of the socio-political processes in Russia in 2000 and 2010 the study reviewed the publication of the National Institute for Strategic Studies, edited by Rozumnyi.²⁵

The study analysed the formation of the tradition of open and fair elections in Ukraine, which was the subject of research by the OPORA organisation, specifically, publications on the 1994 elections,²⁶ the 2004 elections,²⁷ and the 2010 elections.²⁸ Furthermore, another publication examined the results of the 2012 parliamentary elections.²⁹ Authoritarian aspects during the presidency of

20 O. MATUSOVA, *20 years ago, the White House in Moscow was shot at*. 2013. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/25124983.html>

21 L. VANNEK, *Elections to the State Duma of Russia – Results and behind-the-scenes Kremlin games*. 2003. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/910561.html>

22 O. KUNYTSKYI, *The Yukos case: Russia secures review of the case in the Netherlands*. 2021. <https://www.dw.com/uk/verkhovnyi-sud-niderlandiv-vidpravyy-na-perehliad-rishennia-u-spravi-iukosu/a-59736744>

23 European Court of Human Rights, *Dissolution of Russian opposition party was unjustified*. 2011. <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/app/conversion/pdf/?library=ECHR&id=003-3504831-3951446>

24 Military censorship in the Russian Federation, 2022. <https://kanal.dim.tv/voyenna-cenzura-v-rf-chastyna-rosiyan-ne-rozumiyut-prychyn-zhurnalisty-zagovoryly-pro-samvydav-mozhlyvi-naslidky-video/>

25 M. ROZUMNYI, *Putin's Regime: Reboot-2018*. 2018. https://niss.gov.ua/sites/default/files/2019-02/Rezhy_m_Putina_do_druku_new-c9ed2.pdf

26 Y. ZOLOTAREVA, *Election history: Early presidential elections in Ukraine in 1994*. 2021b. <https://www.oporaua.org/vybory/istoriia-vivoriv-dostrokovi-vibori-prezidenta-ukrayini-u-1994-rotsi-22993>

27 Y. ZOLOTAREVA, *Election history: Ukraine elected its third president in 2004 in three rounds*. 2021c. <https://www.oporaua.org/vybory/istoriia-vivoriv-tretogo-prezidenta-v-2004-rotsi-ukrayina-obirala-u-tri-turi-23049>

28 Y. ZOLOTAREVA, *The history of elections: In 2010, a woman entered the second round of the presidential election in Ukraine for the first time*. 2021a. <https://www.oporaua.org/vybory/istoriia-vivoriv-u-2010-rotsi-u-drugii-tur-vivoriv-prezidenta-ukrayini-vpershe-viishla-zhinka-23066>

29 Final report on the results of observation at the early parliamentary elections in Ukraine on July 21, 2019, 2020. https://www.oporaua.org/vybory/zvit-parlamet_election_2019-20227

Leonid Kuchma were also studied,³⁰ prime ministerial rotations,³¹ the scandal of Gongadze's murder,³² and other problems in the Ukrainian parliament.³³ The official web portal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine³⁴ studied the composition of the parliament of different convocations.

In the context of the transformation of the regulatory sphere in Russia in 2010 and 2020, information from the International Federation for Human Rights^{35,36} was used. The development of civil society organisations (CSOs) in Ukraine and Russia was the subject of the report by Civil Society Organisation.^{37,38,39} In the context of CSO development in Ukraine, the Charities Aid Foundations (CAF)⁴⁰ were also studied.

3. Results

After the collapse of the USSR, the 15 newly formed governments began to build independent states, whose model was an alternative to the Soviet political system. Most of them turned to liberal democracy, the fundamental values of

30 N. LEBED, *Red Director or the Newest Mazepa? On the 30th anniversary of Leonid Kuchma's election*. 2024. <https://glavcom.ua/longreads/chervonij-direktor-chi-novitnij-mazepa-do-30-richchja-obrannja-leonida-kuchmi--1009555.html>

31 D. YANEVSKY, *Live broadcast on October 19, 2003*. 2003. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/909009.html>

32 D. PRYSTAI, *21 years since the abduction of Georgiy Gongadze: A chronicle*. 2021. <https://suspilne.media/63149-20-rokiv-z-vikradenna-georgia-gongadze-hronika/>

33 M. PIROZHUK, *The Verkhovna Rada is back with the Chairman, but the coalition is still in question*. 2008. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/1358351.html>

34 People's Deputies of Ukraine, 2024. https://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/site2/p_deputat_list

35 International Federation for Human Rights, *Table illustrating legislative crackdown on rights and freedoms of the civil society in Russia since 2012, 2017*. https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/tableau_russie_web_paysage_v2-2.pdf

36 International Federation for Human Rights, *The last 50: Russian repressive laws since 2018*, 2023. https://en.zona.media/article/2023/06/08/50rep_en-trl

37 Civil Society Organisation, *The 2014 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*, 2015. https://s3.fr-par.scw.cloud/djnd/cnvs/filer_public/34/9d/349d0c66-2d1b-409f-b8f7-ac5f0eccc2f7/csosi_report_2014.pdf

38 Civil Society Organisation, *2018 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index: Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*, 2019. [https://api.home.ednannia.ua/upload/kch/24/01/10/EE-2018-CSOSI-FINAL%20\(1\).pdf](https://api.home.ednannia.ua/upload/kch/24/01/10/EE-2018-CSOSI-FINAL%20(1).pdf)

39 Civil Society Organisation, *2022 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index: Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*, 2023. <https://www.fhi360.org/wp-content/uploads/drupal/documents/csosi-europe-eurasia-2022-report.pdf>

40 Charities Aid Foundation, *CAF World Giving Index: A global pandemic special report*, 2021. https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-research/cafworldgivingindex2021_report_web2_100621.pdf

which were first incorporated into the political and economic space of the USSR during the perestroika period. However, the path of democratic transition had various trajectories for different Soviet republics that emerged from the same 'cradle'. The proximity of the starting points of these countries in many aspects suggested that the nature of their transition would be substantially alike. The first measurements of the level of democracy conducted by Freedom House⁴¹ demonstrated synchronous assessments, but only in the first decade (Figure 1).

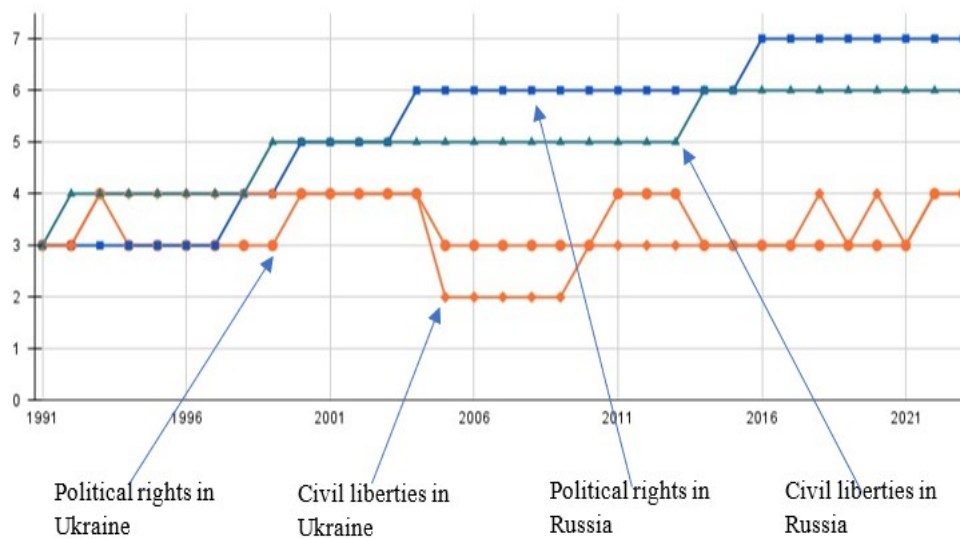


Figure 1. Political rights and civil liberties in Ukraine and Russia in 1991–2024

Source: created by the authors of this study based on Freedom House⁴²

Despite synchronous periods of decline, for instance, from 2000 to 2004, when indicators in both countries deteriorated, Ukraine did not exceed the critical value of 4 points in both parameters, remaining a partially free democracy, while from 1991 to the present-day Ukraine has never been in the zone of unfree countries. However, in the 5 years from 2005 to 2009, the state of political rights and civil liberties was assessed at 3 and 2 points respectively, which allows defining the country's political regime as free. In Russia, however, the score dropped to 5 points in both dimensions, and since 2004, the state of political rights has

⁴¹ Freedom House, *Country and territory ratings and statuses, 1973–2024*, 2025. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>

⁴² *Ibid.*

been assessed at 6 points, putting the country in the unfree status it is in today. Thus, the closeness of the starting positions of both countries and a certain synchronicity of the pace and direction of development in the first years of their independence did not create a single track, setting multiple trajectories for their development based on a common authoritarian past. Accordingly, the experience of democratic transformation is essential source of comparison in the study of factors of obstacles to democratisation.

The path to democratisation in Ukraine and Russia began with a common political culture, the basis of which has been rapidly developing since the late 1980s. The formation of democratic prospects for the development of the communist political system of the USSR was a political alternative that liberalised the existing regime and thus substantially disrupted the foundations of the old one.⁴³ However, the achievement of statistically visible results of changes that would transform institutions was a long process of incorporation of new social norms and value orientations in both societies.

According to the evolutionary theory of modernisation,⁴⁴ democracy is more likely to develop in societies with strong levels of self-expression. Accordingly, institutional changes that modernise the political system are interpreted as a reaction to the pressure of new values embedded in society. However, transformational societies, including most of the post-communist countries, had extremely unstable dynamics of economic development and political reformatting, creating unfavourable conditions for the consolidation of a new political culture oriented towards democratic values.^{45,46} The decline of communist ideology created a value vacuum filled, according to Inglehart, with

43 M. BLIKHAR, M. VINICHUK, M. KASHCHUK, V. GAPCHICH, S. BABII, *Economic and legal aspects of ensuring the effectiveness of counteracting corruption in the system of anti-corruption measures of state authorities*, in *Financial and Credit Activity: Problems of Theory and Practice*, 2023, 4(51), pp. 398–407.

44 R. F. INGLEHART, *Cultural evolution: People's motivations are changing, and reshaping the world*, Cambridge University Press, 2018.

45 K. KETNERS, Z. JARGALSAIKHAN, A. MILLER, O. MILIENKO, L. MALKHASYAN, *Evaluation of effective anti-corruption strategies in state institutions*, in *Ceridap*, 2025, 2025(1), pp. 93–118.

46 O. KOTUKOV, D. KARAMYSHEV, T. KOTUKOVA, A. CHERNOIVANENKO, A. SERENOK, *Can digital transparency tools systematically reduce corruption in government? Evidence from Estonia, Ukraine and Brazil*, in *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Information Technology*, 2025, 103(10), pp. 4256–4257.

traditional values of religious and/or nationalist beliefs. Consequently, even during periods of economic growth in these countries, there was a rather slow increase in the share of people who preferred the values of self-expression. Comparative data from four waves of surveys in Ukraine and Russia collected for the World Values Survey (WVS)⁴⁷ confirmed this statement, as the share of postmaterialists has stayed extremely low for more than two decades of research, while the share of materialists has been extremely high (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of the post-materialism index of Ukraine and Russia according to the survey waves

	Wave No. 4		Wave No. 5		Wave No. 6		Wave No. 7	
	Ukraine 1996	Russia 1995	Ukraine 2006	Russia 2006	Ukraine 2011	Russia 2011	Ukraine 2020	Russia 2017
Materialists	50.1	54.5	47.2	53.9	46.2	52.7	43.4	52.2
Mixed	40.1	42.2	47	41.7	50.1	44.9	45.4	41.3
Post-materialists	2.3	1.6	3.4	1.8	3.7	2.7	4.8	3.4

Source: created by the authors of this study based on World Values Survey⁴⁸

The proximity of Ukraine and Russia, recorded on the World Values Survey⁴⁹ for all years of observation from 1980 to 2024, illustrates these slow dynamics, which had a lower rate of change compared to the Baltic states and other post-communist countries classified as the cultural zone of Catholic Europe. However, both countries had high scores on the scales of secular rational and survival values. Thus, the placement of Ukraine and Russia on these cultural maps, on the one hand, demonstrates the equally slow dynamics of overcoming the Soviet value heritage, and on the other hand, indicates a weak tendency to increase the weight of self-expression values. The role of emancipatory values in assessing the level of democracy in each country deserves special attention, as people with grea-

⁴⁷ World Values Survey, *Online Data Analysis*, 2025. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ World Values Survey, *WVS Cultural Map: 2023 Version Released*, 2023. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSNewsShow.jsp?ID=467>

ter emancipatory values, according to the authors of the study, are more likely to underestimate the democratic performance of their country than to overestimate it, and thus they can encourage an active public to engage in non-violent protest to prevent a shift away from democracy.⁵⁰

In the case of Ukraine and Russia, all the above factors are significant, as the complex colonial history of relations between the peoples and the various religious and national landscapes of these countries have shaped major cultural differences that have played a role in both the medium and long term. However, decades of living under the same totalitarian political system could not but lead to similarities in the value orientations of citizens of both countries, which was recorded on cultural maps, and their proximity to each other on these maps helped the researchers to classify both countries as orthodox societies of the zone of communist influence.⁵¹ Meanwhile, a closer look at the religious situation in both countries reveals significant differences, marked by the civilisational fault line that separates Western Christianity from Orthodox Christianity and Islam and runs through Ukraine.⁵² This has undoubtedly led to the heterogeneity of not only the religious but also the general cultural space of Ukraine, although it was not clearly recorded by the sociological indicators of the values survey.

Additionally, the western Ukrainian lands became part of the USSR only in 1939, after the division of Poland between two dictators. In such a political paradigm, it was the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) that, in the absence of national statehood on the territory of Ukraine, became a socio-political authority, a centre of national self-preservation and retained its influence in the 21st century.⁵³ After the collapse of the USSR, two large “branches” were formed within Orthodoxy: The UOC-MP, which did not break its canonical ties with the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), and the UOC-KP, autonomous from the

50 C. WELZEL, R. INGLEHART, F. DEUTSCH, *Social capital, voluntary associations and collective action: Which aspects of social capital have the greatest ‘civic’ payoff?*, in *Journal of Civil Society*, 2006, 1(2), pp. 121–146.

51 *Ibid.*

52 S. P. HUNTINGTON, *The clash of civilizations?*, in *Foreign Affairs*, 1993, 72(3), pp. 22–49.

53 H. BILORUSETS, *Soviet crimes in western Ukraine in 1939–1941: Imprisonment, torture, executions and deportation*. 2022. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/srsr-represiyi-tortury-deportatsiya/32036952.html>

jurisdiction of the ROC, which expressed the belief of a considerable number of churchgoers (in 2004, 50.44% of respondents identified themselves as the UOC-KP and 26.13% as the UOC-Moscow Patriarchate) in the desire for church autocephaly and independence from Russian influence in all spheres of social and political life.⁵⁴ This factor also played a significant role in shaping values, as supporters of the UOC-KP were mostly proactive citizens, more loyal in their perception of social change. Supporters of the UOC constituted a more conservative part of the churchgoers, focused on preserving established religious traditions and loyal to a wider range of ideological messages of 'superior-power' Russian Orthodoxy. Thus, Ukraine was not only historically and geographically more integrated into the Western world than Russia, but also religiously represented the crossroads of two cultural zones: Orthodox and Catholic. It was not, in fact, confessionally homogeneous within Orthodoxy itself, which was a consequence not only of the internal church struggle for a place in the hierarchy, but also a reflection of the attitude of Ukrainian society towards the autonomy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

In this context, the question "How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically?" is indicative. Differences in the results revealed the presence of positive dynamics (according to different waves of the WVS) in the assessments of Ukrainian respondents and negative dynamics in the answers of Russian respondents. In the 6th wave (2010-2014), to the question "How important is it for you to live in a country where the laws of democracy prevail?", 26% of Russians and 36% of Ukrainians expressed absolute confidence in the value of democracy. Another 38% of Russians and the same number of Ukrainians consider democracy to be rather important, with scores ranging from 7 to 9 out of 10. In other words, a total of 64% of Russians and 74% of Ukrainians rated the democratic form of government highly. The data from the 7th wave of the survey revealed major differences among those for whom living in a democratic country was crucial. Accordingly, 43% of Ukrainians and only 23% of Russians expressed absolute confidence in the value of democracy for them. Ove-

⁵⁴ New survey: 60% of UOC-KP and 24% of UOC-MP supporters in Ukraine, 2016. <https://www.religion.in.ua/news/vazhливо/33672-nove-doslidzhennya-v-ukrayini-60-prixilnikiv-upc-kp-ta-24-upc-mp.html>

rall, 61% of Russians and 74% of Ukrainians declared the significance of the democratic system among their political priorities.⁵⁵ Thus, the gap between expectations and perceptions of the reality in Ukraine is much wider, with many consequences, including deepening frustration and a growing sense of relative disadvantage, which has become the basis for the maturation of protest moods. This led to two large-scale waves of citizen mobilisation in 2004 and 2013-2014, which played a key role in the development of democratisation processes in the country's political system. In this context, the most recent polling results are also significant. For instance, in 2024, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) published the findings of a survey,⁵⁶ where 59% of Ukrainians said that the development of a democratic system is significant for Ukraine. Meanwhile, a poll conducted by the National Opinion Research Centre of the University of Chicago showed⁵⁷ that in 2024, 67% of Russians approved of the state's foreign policy, 58% of internal policy, and 66% would vote for Putin in the next election.

The late 1980s and early 1990s were years of intense democratic development in both Ukraine and Russia. However, the first serious political tests revealed major differences in the consolidation of democratic institutions and democratic orientations overall. Accordingly, in autumn 1993 in Russia, against the backdrop of acute ethnic conflicts and a deep economic crisis, in the confrontation between the Russian parliament and President Boris Yeltsin, the latter won the military attack on the opposition parliament.⁵⁸ Subsequently, amendments to the Constitution were adopted that substantially strengthened presidential power by establishing a so-called "super-presidential republic" with a monocentric model of power, thus levelling the principles of separation of state power in the Russian Federation.⁵⁹

55 World Values Survey, *Online Data Analysis*, 2025. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

56 A. GRUSHETSKY, *To what extent do Ukrainians consider Ukraine a democratic country and the priority of the democratic system*. 2024. <https://kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=1406&page=1>

57 M. GYCHKO, *63% of Russians support the war in Ukraine – University of Chicago poll*. 2024. <https://www.unian.ua/russianworld/63-rosiyan-pidtrimuyut-viynu-v-ukrajini-opituvannya-chikazkogo-universitetu-12506979.html>

58 O. MATUSOVA, *20 years ago, the White House in Moscow was shot at*. 2013. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/25124983.html>

59 M. ROZUMNYI, *Putin's Regime: Reboot-2018*. 2018. https://niss.gov.ua/sites/default/files/2019-02/Rezhym_Putina_do_druku_new-c9ed2.pdf

Since 2000, V. Putin's presidency, in the wake of failed modernisation, has been rapidly turning the country towards dedemocratisation and consolidating in the choice of "authoritarian revenge": the omnipotence of law enforcement agencies is restored, the media is taken under control, regional self-government centres are eliminated, total control of the presidential vertical over the federal district government is established, the representative mandate of deputies of the upper house of parliament (the Federation Council) is eliminated by replacing representation with the appointment of officials by the central government. The political ambitions of the oligarchs are levelled through favourable living conditions for those who showed loyalty and through demonstrative repression of those who showed resistance, such as the Yukos case.⁶⁰ Ultimately, these and other related factors lead to the destruction of the possibility of real political competition, and the role of socio-political activity is reduced to fictitious functions, namely, ensuring the legitimation of the regime's pseudo-democratic policies.⁶¹ Under these conditions, the power of United Russia, the ruling party, gained more than two-thirds of the seats in the 2003 State Duma elections.⁶² The results were secured with the use of administrative resources, but this did not provoke widespread public resistance. However, the fastest and most fundamental political decisions that finally cemented the authoritarian turn began in 2014, with the annexation of Crimea and the start of the hybrid war against Ukraine.

As for Ukraine, in 1994, an event occurred that was common for established democracies, but unusual and significant for the "young" Ukrainian democracy: the presidential election of incumbent President Leonid Kravchuk was defeated by a representative of large industrial circles, Leonid Kuchma.⁶³ In 1996, through heated debates, the Constitution was adopted,⁶⁴ which consolidated the

60 O. KUNYTSKYI, *The Yukos case: Russia secures review of the case in the Netherlands*. 2021. <https://www.dw.com/uk/verkhovnyi-sud-niderlandiv-vidpravyv-na-perehliad-rishennia-uspravi-iukosu/a-59736744>

61 M. ROZUMNYI, *Putin's Regime: Reboot-2018*. 2018. https://niss.gov.ua/sites/default/files/2019-02/Rezhym_Putina_do_druku_new-c9ed2.pdf

62 L. VANNEK, *Elections to the State Duma of Russia – Results and behind-the-scenes Kremlin games*. 2003. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/910561.html>

63 Y. ZOLOTAREVA, *Election history: Early presidential elections in Ukraine in 1994*. 2021b. <https://www.oporaua.org/vybory/istoriia-viboriv-dostrokovi-vibori-prezidenta-ukrayini-u-1994-rotsi-22993>

64 Law of Ukraine No. 254/96-VR "On the Adoption of the Constitution of Ukraine and its Enactment", 1996. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254/96-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text>

presidential-parliamentary system of government. Overall, Kuchma's presidency was characterised⁶⁵ by attempts to balance between two influential financial and industrial groups (the so-called Dnipro and Donetsk "clans"), which "competed" for state "trophies" and, above all, for the post of prime minister. The strategy of cooperation with the oligarchs and a major political crisis over the alleged ordering of the murder of journalist Georgiy Gongadze and mass protests in 2001 demanding an investigation into the murder and resignation of Leonid Kuchma,⁶⁶ analogous to the scenario in Russia, forced Kuchma to negotiate with financial groups to prepare a successor who would guarantee Kuchma's immunity.⁶⁷ However, an almost identical plan to the Russian one, which envisaged the victory of an agreed prime minister in the new presidential election, failed. Fraud in favour of the pro-government candidate Viktor Yanukovich brought hundreds of thousands of protesters to the streets, who, after a prolonged standoff, secured a run-off vote and, thanks to public scrutiny, ensured a fair vote count in the second round, where pro-democratic candidate Viktor Yushchenko won.⁶⁸ This event, known as the Orange Revolution, demonstrated the government's inability to resolve the conflict by force, while at the same time showing the public the power of collective action. Although the road to democracy was difficult and winding, the traditions of political competition, pluralism, and civic engagement were taking deeper root in Ukrainian society.⁶⁹ The attempted authoritarian revenge of Viktor Yanukovich, who managed to return to politics as a result of new (fair) presidential elections, was again foiled by large-scale public resistance after a three-month protest campaign – the Revolution of Dignity.

65 D. YANEVSKY, *Live broadcast on October 19, 2003*. 2003. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/909009.html>

66 D. PRYSTAI, *21 years since the abduction of Georgiy Gongadze: A chronicle*. 2021. <https://suspilne.media/63149-20-rokiv-z-vikradenna-georgia-gongadze-hronikal>

67 N. LEBED, *Red Director or the Newest Mazepa? On the 30th anniversary of Leonid Kuchma's election*. 2024. <https://glavcom.ua/longreads/chervonij-direktor-chi-novitnij-mazepa-do-30-richchja-obrannja-leonida-kuchmi--1009555.html>

68 Y. ZOLOTAREVA, *Election history: Ukraine elected its third president in 2004 in three rounds*. 2021c. <https://www.oporaua.org/vybory/istoriia-viboriv-tretogo-prezidenta-v-2004-rotsi-ukrayina-obirala-u-tri-turi-23049>

69 O. SEMENENKO, S. HODZ, R. DUZHYI, I. STUPNYTSKYI, V. KOVERGA, *Mechanisms for ensuring energy security in the system of international relations considering economic sanctions and political conflicts*, in *Economics of Development*, 2024, 23(4), pp. 72-81.

As demonstrated above, since the second half of 1990, the political trajectories of Ukraine and Russia have increasingly diverged. Clearly, the key reason for this is the development of a different balance of power between the parties as a result of the consolidation of “closed” or “open access” institutions.⁷⁰ In Russia, the development of a hierarchical elite with exclusive rights to dominant resources occurred due to the weakening of competitiveness in socio-economic and political processes, which influenced the institutionalisation and acculturation of authoritarian political culture. The fragmentation of Ukrainian elites in the absence of an oligarchic consensus did not allow the authorities to monopolise access to political resources, creating structural opportunities for the gradual strengthening of open society institutions, such as political competition, change of government, public control, legislative implementation, democratic norms and values.

The weakness of the authoritarian regime in Ukraine was undoubtedly conditioned by the weakness of the state's economy, administrative chaos, and oligarchic transition to a market economy, but the situation in the socio-political sector showed considerable potential for a democratic political system of Ukraine.^{71,72} Pluralism by default' did take place, but not only and not so much because of state helplessness as because of the historical and political background of Ukrainian statehood. At the beginning of Ukraine's independence, a national-democratic socio-political movement was already actively developing, led by dissidents and former political prisoners of the Soviet communist regime, who managed to gain the support of the general public and convert it to secure a sufficiently strong position in the first parliament and build up the forces of democratic representation with each subsequent election cycle. Considering that Ukraine did not undergo a radical change of elites in the 1990s (removal of the communist nomenklatura), ideological confrontation in parliament has always been acute, while the balance of power since the 2nd convocation of the

70 D. C. NORTH, J. J. WALLIS, B. R. WEINGAST, *Violence and social orders: A conceptual framework for interpreting recorded human history*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.

71 V. VOLIK, Y. LOZHMETS, O. DAVYDOVA, S. SPRYNCHUK, D. SHVETS, *Electronic governance in Ukraine and Estonia current situation and prospectives*, in *Journal of Legal, Ethical and Regulatory Issues*, 2019, 22(Special Issue 2).

72 P. PETROVSKYY, *A democratic trend in the development of the public administrative sphere in Ukraine in the post-war period*, in *Democratic Governance*, 2023, 16(1), pp. 1-11.

Verkhovna Rada has never been dominated by anti-Western and anti-democratic forces, so that pro-democratic forces could be pushed out of the political and media space.⁷³ In 2006, the parliamentary elections after the Orange Revolution marked the first time a democratically oriented parliamentary coalition was formed. However, the new balance of political forces proved to be so fragile that over the next 4 years there were a series of coalition rotations in different configurations of political associations,⁷⁴ and after the return of Viktor Yanukovich in the 2010 presidential election and his Party of Regions in the local council elections in the autumn of the same year, a period of authoritarian backsliding began.⁷⁵

But even under such conditions, new parties were actively created in Ukraine, as evidenced by the fact that representatives of 124 parties in majority districts and representatives of 98 parties on party lists were elected to councils of various levels.⁷⁶ The revanchist government's awareness of the danger of a strong parliamentary opposition and institutional pressure from opposition political parties pushed the government to take controversial decisions, including the criminal prosecution of opposition leaders Yulia Tymoshenko and Yuriy Lutsenko and their sentences (late 2011 – early 2012) to 7 and 4 years in prison, respectively. Such decisions were regarded by international organisations as political repression and led to the polarisation of public sentiment within the country and the activation of both opposition political parties and the socio-political sector overall. Despite such pressure and the use of administrative resources, in the 2012 parliamentary elections, 81 political parties nominated candidates in single-mandate constituencies and 21 – on party lists.⁷⁷ According to the results of these

⁷³ People's Deputies of Ukraine, 2024. https://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/site2/p_deputat_list

⁷⁴ M. PIROZHUK, *The Verkhovna Rada is back with the Chairman, but the coalition is still in question*. 2008. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/1358351.html>

⁷⁵ Y. ZOLOTAREVA, *The history of elections: In 2010, a woman entered the second round of the presidential election in Ukraine for the first time*. 2021a. <https://www.oporaua.org/vybory/istoriia-viboriv-u-2010-rotsi-u-drugii-tur-viboriv-prezidenta-ukrayini-vpershe-viishla-zhinka-23066>

⁷⁶ Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research, *Dynamics of party representation in Ukraine after the revolution of dignity*, 2016. <http://www.ucipr.org.ua/en/publications/publication/dynamics-of-party-representation-in-ukraine-after-the-revolution-of-dignity/>

⁷⁷ Final report on the results of observation at the early parliamentary elections in Ukraine on July 21, 2019, 2020. https://www.oporaua.org/vybory/zvit_parlamet_election_2019-20227

elections, the representation of opposition parties in the parliament reached 41.4% of the total, and the ruling Party of Regions won 47.3% of the seats.⁷⁸ However, a more realistic picture of electoral preferences can be observed considering that the elections to the Verkhovna Rada were held under a mixed system, where only half of the parliament was elected on party lists, while the other half was formed in single-member constituencies under the majority system.

In the context of a considerable increase in formal and informal influence of the central government on mandates, majoritarian representation mostly demonstrated the consolidation of elites around the central government, while the proportional representation system reflected the mass sentiments.⁷⁹ Thus, according to this analytical perspective, the role of ideological pluralism and real political competition in the functioning of the so-called “default pluralism” becomes clear. In the absence of a public consensus around the government and polarisation of ideological (party) priorities, authoritarian authorities can only rely on financially and administratively consolidated elites, which, incidentally, are also ideologically and regionally fragmented.⁸⁰ Therefore, authoritarianism in Ukraine arguably has failed not so much because of a lack of resources as because of the extremely prohibitive costs of suppressing resistance. Extensive institutional and structural resources were consolidated in the hands of the authorities: a pro-presidential parliament and a controlled power vertical, expanded constitutional powers of the president, economic stabilisation of the country, full control over law enforcement agencies, and even the judiciary. However, this consolidation looked like a colosse aux pieds d'argile, as the entire structure was not backed by consolidated public support. Thus, the broad public support for the opposition, the growing institutional capacity of civil society, and the experience of previous

78 Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research, *Dynamics of party representation in Ukraine after the revolution of dignity*, 2016. <http://www.ucipr.org.ua/en/publications/publication/dynamics-of-party-representation-in-ukraine-after-the-revolution-of-dignity/>

79 V. V. HALTSOVA, O. O. VOLODINA, V. I. HORDIEIEV, I. V. SAMOSHCHENKO, K. M. OROBETS, *Analysis of criminal law on ecocide: A case study of war in Ukraine*, in *Revista Kavsaypacha: Sociedad y Medio Ambiente*, 2024, 2024-July-December(14), article no. D-013.

80 O. BAZALUK, D. SVYRYDENKO, S. TEREPIYSHCHYI, *Structural-functional models of integration and reintegration of Ukrainian educational landscape*, in *Naukovyi Visnyk Natsionalnogo Hirnychoho Universytetu*, 2017, 5, pp. 163-168.

political achievements made the cost of keeping the authoritarian government on its own two feet prohibitively high.

In 1990, in the last year of the USSR's existence, the Resolution On Enacting the Law of the USSR No. 1709-1 "On Public Associations"⁸¹ was adopted, which set very favourable rules for the establishment and registration of political parties. To be legally recognised, a political party had to have at least five thousand members, which was not a major obstacle in a country of millions. However, the situation with the establishment of political parties in Russia was different, as evidenced by complaints to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).⁸² Representatives of the Republican Party of Russia filed a lawsuit with the ECtHR, which delivered a judgement in the case. The verdict states that the Russian authorities violated Article 11 (guarantee of freedom of association) of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and notes that Russian party legislation does not meet European standards. Specifically, the Court ruled that the establishment of an excessive threshold for the number of party members and an excessive 7% threshold were incompatible with democratic norms. The Court gave a clear assessment of this legislative practice as one that undoubtedly had a clear negative impact on the ability of diverse political forces to take part effectively in the political process and thus affected pluralism. Specifically, this effect is evidenced by the fact that only fifteen political parties out of forty-eight managed to meet the increased minimum membership requirement. Thus, the above facts suggest that the authorities deliberately took measures to reduce the level of democratic debate, deprived the opposition of a parliamentary platform to defend an alternative course, and weakened its organisational and institutional capacity to influence decision-making and political processes overall.

81 Resolution On Enacting the Law of the USSR No. 1709-1 "On Public Associations", 1990. <https://www.economics.kiev.ua/download/ZakonySSSR/data01/tex10701.htm>

82 European Court of Human Rights, *Dissolution of Russian opposition party was unjustified*, 2011. <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/app/conversion/pdf/?library=ECHR&id=003-3504831-3951446>

International Federation for Human Rights⁸³ published the results of a thorough monitoring of Russian legislation, which, after Putin's re-election as president in 2012, began to rapidly generate norms aimed at suppressing free thought and civic activity in Russia. A list of 50 laws and regulations was compiled, which included provisions aimed at complicating the activities of non-governmental and human rights organisations, increasing surveillance and censorship, undermining freedom and pluralism in the media space, imposing a single correct interpretation of government actions and even historical events, etc. The government's illiberal campaign was launched rapidly after the annexation of Crimea and the launch of a hybrid war against Ukraine in 2014. Additionally, International Federation for Human Rights,⁸⁴ another list of more than 50 laws was compiled, which were enacted between 2018 and 2022. The final course to retain power by imposing a new ideological framework of expansionist imperial narratives on society in preparation for a full-scale war pushed the authorities to adopt increasingly repressive laws that further restricted civil liberties. Grey zones that left at least some possibility of public expression of alternative opinions in the media or even political space were completely eradicated.

Thus, the Russian authorities succeeded in what the Ukrainian authorities failed to do – to tame their opponents by ousting the political, parliamentary, and “disloyal” opposition and establishing control over civil society as an institution and its individual representatives. The two historical examples described above can serve to illustrate two alternative scenarios for the development of post-mobilisation processes that consolidate the principles of a democratic or authoritarian regime. The democratic failure was not caused by the power of the Communist Party, but by the absence of consolidated political forces capable of offering an effective alternative. The long period of political turbulence created a public demand for a “strong hand” to bring order to the chaos of the young democracy, which in the public mind was associated with the destruction of the entrenched egalitarian and paternalistic model of relations, which led to uncertain-

83 International Federation for Human Rights, *Table illustrating legislative crackdown on rights and freedoms of the civil society in Russia since 2012, 2017.* https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/tableau_russie_web_paysage_v2-2.pdf

84 International Federation for Human Rights, *The last 50: Russian repressive laws since 2018, 2023.* https://en.zona.media/article/2023/06/08/50rep_en-trl

ty about the future, frustration, and phobia about the world of market economy and political competition, which was considered as a kind of struggle without rules.

The evolution of Ukrainian parliamentarism demonstrated the development of a political scenario where the political opposition failed to overcome the communist majority in the first stage of democratic development.⁸⁵ However, as noted earlier, the communist majority was opposed by a fairly cohesive opposition of democratic forces united by the idea of national revival and restructuring of Ukrainian statehood.

Thus, the Ukrainian opposition had an essential consolidating element that served as a link for many disparate political forces across a wide ideological spectrum, from the moderate left to the conservative right.

Therefore, in the long run, Ukraine managed to consolidate alternative sentiments into political support for anti-communist forces and win the right and opportunity to function in a competitive political space, while Russia, despite the absence of communist party dominance, was unable to leverage this advantage to build stable democratic institutions and implement democratic values.

To illustrate the level of development of civic engagement in a country, one can rely on the Civil Society Organisation Sustainability Index (CSOSI), an instrument for measuring the power of the civil sector. Notably, these studies have been conducted in Ukraine since 2005, and therefore the coverage range is 18 years – up to 2022, as the latest data is available (Figure 2).

85 B. UDERBAYEVA, *Legal aspects of the security of the Caspian region in light of the Russia-Ukraine conflict*, in *Eurasian Legal Systems in a World in Transition: Economic prosperity or disparity, and the return of politics in international law*, Peter Lang AG, 2024, pp. 267–278.

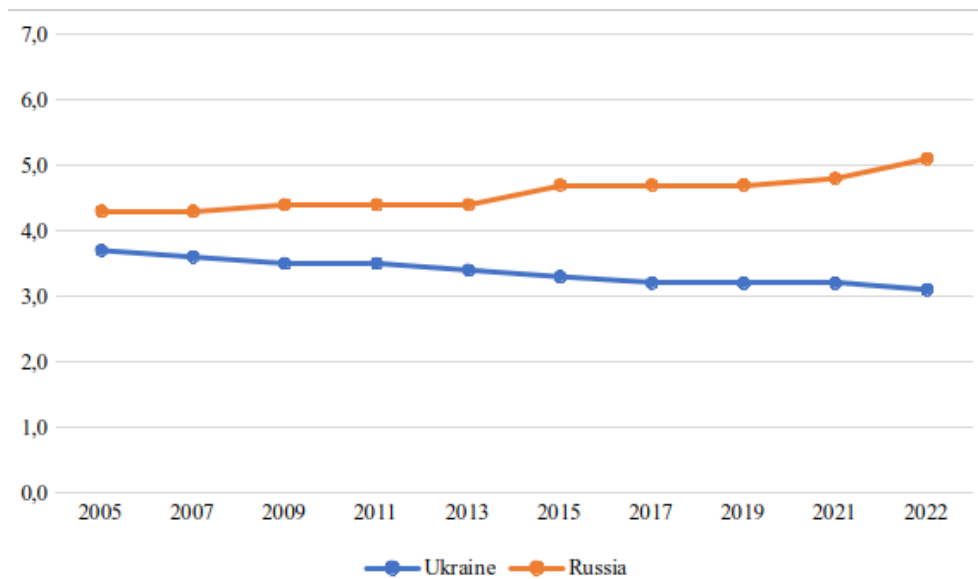


Figure 2. Overall sustainability of civil society organisations (1 – the highest, 7 – the lowest)

Source: created by the authors of this study based on 2022 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index⁸⁶

The data over the years show comparable trends to Freedom House's⁸⁷ assessment of the state of democracy: Ukraine is slowly moving towards strengthening the position of civil society, while Russia is losing it faster. The year 2014, the year of the hybrid invasion of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, marked a pivotal moment that signalled a steady decline in the resilience of civil society in Russia. According to CSOSI,⁸⁸ anti-Western government rhetoric portraying CSOs as spies and sources of Western influence became more frequent in Russia, especially in relation to human rights organisations. Even then, the government's CSO policy applied double standards to pro-government (or non-political) CSOs and those that claimed to take part in political and legal processes. The re-

⁸⁶ Civil Society Organisation, *2022 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index: Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*, 2023. <https://www.fhi360.org/wp-content/uploads/drupal/documents/csosi-europe-eurasia-2022-report.pdf>

⁸⁷ Freedom House, *Country and territory ratings and statuses, 1973–2024*, 2025. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>

⁸⁸ Civil Society Organisation, *The 2014 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*, 2015. https://s3.fr-par.scw.cloud/djnd/cnvos/filer_public/34/9d/349d0c66-2d1b-409f-b8f7-ac5f0eccc2f7/csosi_report_2014.pdf

port concludes that “the state has created pseudo-independent think tanks and human rights defenders that support the government’s positions”. Civil Society Organisation Sustainability Index⁸⁹ assessment underwent even greater changes, stating that there are two civil societies in Russia, one consisting of numerous organisations (charitable, sports, cultural, educational, etc.) that do not publicly express their disagreement with the state, while other organisations that are critical of the authorities. The state has demonstrated a different attitude towards these two segments of civil society, selectively applying laws to disloyal organisations to suppress dissent. Apart from the above, the worst capacity scores were given to those parameters that are largely dependent on the government. Thus, the lowest scores for 2022 were given to the legal environment (6.8), public image (5.3), financial capacity, and advocacy (5.2 each). As of 2022, the legal environment for the functioning of civil society made it virtually impossible for organisations critical of the government to operate, as after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Russian government adopted a series of laws⁹⁰ that introduced ‘de facto military censorship’ and made it impossible to provide any financial support to even the least critical organisations. In the same year, 2022, a law on control over the activities of persons under foreign influence came into force, which greatly increased state control over individuals or organisations.⁹¹

As for Ukraine’s experience in establishing civil society organisations, an analytical report by the National Centre for Strategic Studies⁹² suggests a link between the increase in the number of civil society organisations and the mass protest movements that took place in 2004-2005. On the eve of the Orange Revolution, there was a surge in the creation of new CSOs and, importantly, an expansion of the types of public associations, including charitable organisations,

89 Civil Society Organisation, *2018 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index. Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*, 2019. [https://api.home.ednannia.ua/upload/kch/24/01/10/EE-2018-CSOSI-FINAL%20\(1\).pdf](https://api.home.ednannia.ua/upload/kch/24/01/10/EE-2018-CSOSI-FINAL%20(1).pdf)

90 Military censorship in the Russian Federation, 2022. <https://kanal.dim.tv/voyennaczennura-v-rf-chastyna-rosiyan-ne-rozumiyut-prychyn-zhurnalisty-zagovoryly-pro-samvydav-mozhlyvi-naslidky-video/>

91 In Russia, a law has come into force that allows people to be declared “foreign agents” on a massive scale, 2022. <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-rosia-inoahenty/32157473.html>

92 Yu. A. TYSHCHENKO, O. M. LITVINENKO, O. Yu. MIKHAILOVA, Yu. B. KAPLAN, D. M. GORELOV, A. KORNIIEVSKY, G. O. PALIY, N. I. PELIVANOVA, *The state of development of civil society in Ukraine: The path and keys for another 30 years*. National Institute for Strategic Studies, 2021.

trade unions, and professional associations. The rapid growth in the number of civil society organisations continued after the Revolution of Dignity, with the number of organisations reaching 94,353 in 2021. Notably, the growth covered all practices of civic activity, including the formation of charitable organisations, which totalled 1,444 in 2021 (compared to 13,579 in 2015), the volunteer movement, civic initiatives in support of reforms and anti-corruption, etc. According to the Charities Aid Foundation Index,⁹³ Ukraine has one of the fastest growth rates, as it has risen 83 positions (from 103rd to 20th) from 2014 to 2021. And according to the Charities Aid Foundation,⁹⁴ Ukraine ranks 7th in the global ranking. However, according to Charities Aid Foundation,⁹⁵ Russia is also gradually improving its position. In 2014, it was ranked 126th, in 2021 – 67th, and in 2024 it was already 35th. This, at the same time, proves the effectiveness of the state in broadly supporting the “loyal civil sector” and explains the real involvement of Russian society in the waging of the war of aggression in Ukraine, as charity and volunteering also means assistance to the occupying forces on Ukrainian soil. Additionally, the 2024 report indicated that both Ukraine and Russia have proven to be the most productive in the long term in terms of charity and volunteering.

Therefore, overall, Ukraine is slowly but surely demonstrating positive dynamics in strengthening civil society and building the institutional capacity of NGOs, allowing the country to move closer to the countries with the highest civil society resilience, as determined by a score range from 1 to 3. Thus, as of 2022, Ukraine’s score was only 0.2 greater than Poland’s (2.9) and better than other countries in the region, such as Moldova (3.7), Georgia (4), Hungary (4), Serbia (4.3), and evidently Russia (5.1) and Belarus (6) (lower scores indicate greater resilience). In contrast, Russia has been steadily moving towards a deterioration in the sustainability and effectiveness of CSOs, and this trend was ob-

93 Charities Aid Foundation, *CAF World Giving Index: A global pandemic special report*, 2021. https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-research/cafworldgivingindex2021_report_web2_100621.pdf

94 Charities Aid Foundation, *World Giving Index*. 2014. https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/caf_wgi2014_report_1555awebfinal.pdf

95 Charities Aid Foundation, *World Giving Index*. 2024. https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/inside-giving/wgi/wgi_2024_report.pdf

served across all seven indicators.

The crucial factor in the sustainable strengthening of civil society in Ukraine was the experience of two large-scale and long-term mobilisation campaigns that became catalysts for organised civic activity, helped position new leaders, and formed new centres and directions to unite activists, illustrated the significance and possibility of collective control over the government, 'wrote' a success story, and rewrote the old social contract that did not suit the majority of citizens. At the same time, in Russia, the defeat of civil protests and the success of the authorities in gradually institutionalising legislative restrictions on the activities of public associations became a verdict for the organised public in its efforts to influence socio-political processes, control the actions of the authorities and shape the political agenda.

4. Discussion

The findings of the conducted study, particularly the World Values Survey on satisfaction with their political system, revealed a much stronger desire for democracy among Ukrainians than among Russians. Liu⁹⁶ also noted that Ukraine as a state has undergone a democratic revolution that opposed authoritarian Russia. Furthermore, the results of the World Values Survey also showed a positive trend in the answers of Ukrainian respondents and a negative trend in the answers of Russians. Considering this, Kołczyńska⁹⁷ also added that a quality higher education system is closely linked to democratic values regardless of the level of democracy in a country, but this link is strongest in democratic countries. Public support also helps to sustain democracy and prevent its backsliding,⁹⁸ while its very presence increases the growth of innovation⁹⁹ and the economy.¹⁰⁰

96 Z. LIU, *News framing of the Euromaidan protests in the hybrid regime and the liberal democracy: Comparison of Russian and UK news media*, in *Media, War & Conflict*, 2022, 15(4), pp. 407–426.

97 M. KOŁCZYŃSKA, *Democratic values, education, and political trust*, in *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 2020, 61(1), pp. 3–26.

98 C. CLASSEN, *Does public support help democracy survive?*, in *American Journal of Political Science*, 2019, 64(1), pp. 118–134.

99 Q. J. WANG, G. F. FENG, H. J. WANG, C. P. CHANG, *The impacts of democracy on innovation: Revisited evidence*, in *Technovation*, 2021, 108, article no. 102333.

100 S. M. NGUEA, A. G. NOULA, I. NOUMBA, *Financial globalization and democracy: implications for economic growth in African countries*, in *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 2024, 15, pp.

The above was the result of a difference in the political dimension in the mid-2000s, as political rights and civil liberties became a priority for Ukraine's development during the Orange Revolution. At the same time, in Russia, the 'suppression' of all freedoms was beginning to be felt. As Reuter and Szakonyi,¹⁰¹ in 2000, Russia's young democracy evolved into what modern political scientists call electoral democracy. That is, a phenomenon where democratic institutions of power adhere to authoritarian methods of governance. Fröhlich¹⁰² came to an analogous conclusion, noting a clear improvement in civil and political freedoms in Ukraine after the Orange Revolution, while in Russia, the indicators have been steadily declining in the first two decades of the new millennium. The religious factor, along with the heterogeneity of the cultural space, also played a role in shaping the political future of the two states. According to Bornio,¹⁰³ the heterogeneity of the former Soviet space and Russia's historically established imperial ambitions have led to the instrumentalization of conflicts throughout the 'near abroad' as a means of slowing down the Euro-Atlantic development of the former Soviet republics. The construction of authoritarianism in modern Russia is also confirmed by Aktürk,¹⁰⁴ who noted that every neo-imperial discourse legitimises itself with reference to a particular civilisational identity, which is relevant to the ROC.¹⁰⁵ In this context, Chatterje-Doody and Tolz¹⁰⁶ added that neo-authoritarian regimes use the mediated memory of the past to legitimise their regimes. As a result, Russia in the Putin era can be considered a case of bureaucra-

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101 O. J. REUTER, D. SZAKONYI, *Party politics and voting in Russia*, in *Russian Politics Today: Stability and Fragility*, edited by Sarah A. Wengle, Cambridge University Press, 2022, pp. 56–80.

102 C. FROHLICH, *Unfinished revolutions: The post-Soviet crisis of governance in Ukraine*, in *Global Policy*, 2023, 14(S4), pp. 77–89.

103 J. BORNIO, *Ethnic heterogeneity as a potential target of active measures of Russia: Identification of vulnerabilities of Polish-Ukrainian relations*, in *Yearbook of the Institute of Central and Eastern Europe*, 2020, 18(3), pp. 27–47.

104 Ş. AKTURK, *Nationalism and religion in comparative perspective: A new typology of national-religious configurations*, in *Nationalities Papers*, 2022, 50(2), pp. 205–218.

105 The ROC spoke about the mission of Russian civilization, 2015. <https://ua.korrespondent.net/world/russia/3469859-u-rpts-rozpovily-pro-misiui-rosiiskoi-tsyvilizatsii>

106 P. N. CHATTERJE-DOODY, V. TOLZ, *Regime legitimation, not nation-building: Media commemoration of the 1917 revolutions in Russia's neo-authoritarian state*, in *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2020, 23(3), pp. 335–353.

tic authoritarianism.¹⁰⁷

As for the development of Russia in 2000, Putin's coming to power returned the country to even greater de-democratisation, 'suppression' of media freedom and other aspects of the introduction of an authoritarian system in the state. In this regard, Lewis¹⁰⁸ noted that although for some time the regime in Russia was studied as isolated due to a series of historical features, in 2000 and 2010 the entire world was already familiar with the so-called "Putinism" as a new authoritarian policy. Kinossian and Morgan¹⁰⁹ noted the inconsistency in the actions of Russia's authoritarian circles. Specifically, economic mega-projects competed with the political views of the Russian authorities aimed at isolation and confrontation with the Western world. A striking example of the shift away from democracy was the difference in the elections to state authorities in Ukraine and Russia. As for the Russian parties, the case even reached the ECtHR, as also reported by Müller.¹¹⁰ As for Ukraine, the period of 2000 was characterised by attempts to balance between the east and the west under the presidency of Leonid Kuchma, and in the next presidential election in an attempt to put Viktor Yanukovich in office. However, the scale of the fraud led to the Orange Revolution as one of the most democratic stages in the development of Ukrainian statehood. In this context, Mitchell¹¹¹ added that the nature of a series of revolutions, including the Orange Revolution, although leading to regime change, also led to new semi-democratic regimes becoming increasingly corrupt and weak over time. While both the factual level of democracy and public opinion on its significance increased, this has not changed Ukraine's post-Soviet institutional legacy. In this

107 J. EVERETT, *Russia in the Putin era – A case of bureaucratic authoritarianism?*, in *New Perspectives*, 2022, 30(1), pp. 47–67.

108 D. G. LEWIS, *Russia's new authoritarianism: Putin and the politics of order*. Edinburgh University Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctv10kmcxz>

109 N. KINOSSIAN, K. MORGAN, *Authoritarian state capitalism: Spatial planning and the megaproject in Russia*, in *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 2023, 55(3), pp. 655–672.

110 A. MULLER, *The European court of human rights and the rise of authoritarianism in Russia*, in *European Populism and Human Rights*, Brill, 2020, pp. 215–255.

111 L. A. MITCHELL, *The color revolutions. Successes and limitations of non-violent protest*, in *Handbook of Revolutions in the 21st Century*, edited by Jack A. Goldstone, Leonid Grinin, Andrey Korotayev, Springer, 2022, pp. 435–445.

regard, Terzyan¹¹² added that substantial negative features of the Ukrainian party system have not undergone radical changes after the revolutions, and thus organisational weakness, vague ideological platforms, lack of accountability, and communication with voters, etc., still persist. The emergence of a 'default pluralism' in Ukraine was a consequence of the historical division of the country, disorganisation and political underpinnings of Ukrainian statehood, which Way¹¹³ also agrees with.

The Russian government's move away from democracy has also been documented in numerous investigations into the number of laws, regulations, etc., that have made it more challenging for NGOs and associations to operate, increased media censorship, etc.¹¹⁴ Daucé and Loveluck¹¹⁵ also addressed censorship, namely the Russian government's close attention to the national online search engine industry. Specifically, this concerned the protests of 2011-2012 and the annexation of Crimea. In fact, according to Kadivar,¹¹⁶ in case of the defeat of protest movements, post-revolutionary authoritarian regimes destroy all independent sources of power and competing organisational structures of society and strengthen the coercive apparatus. Yudin¹¹⁷ added that Russia under Putin is an example of a prebiscitary democracy. Therefore, the defeat of the protests can be considered a major factor in the stabilisation of the authoritarian system, which has overcome the challenges and managed to mobilise and repel socio-political resistance. In the case of Ukraine, the relative stability of democratisation is largely conditioned by the simultaneous coexistence of two different structural factors: the strength of society (as a product of socio-economic development) and the weakness of the authoritarian regime (as a product of state incapacity). Accord-

112 A. TERZYAN, *Towards democratic consolidation? Ukraine after the revolution of dignity*, in *Open Political Science*, 2020, 3, pp. 183–191.

113 L. A. WAY, "The party of power": *Authoritarian diaspora and pluralism by default in Ukraine*, in *Democratization*, 2021, 28(3), pp. 484–501.

114 K. KETNERS, *Adaptation of State Security to Modern Military Operations and Terrorist Risks in the World*, in *Space and Culture India*, 2025, 13(1), pp. 1–5.

115 F. DAUCÉ, B. LOVELUCK, *Codes of conduct for algorithmic news recommendation: The Yandex.News controversy in Russia*, in *First Monday*, 2021, 26(5).

116 M. A. KADIVAR, *Mass mobilization and the durability of new democracies*, in *American Sociological Review*, 2018, 83(2), pp. 390–417.

117 G. YUDIN, *The war in Ukraine: Do Russians support Putin?*, in *Journal of Democracy*, 2022, 33(3), pp. 31–37. <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/860242>

ding to the researchers, third-wave democracies demonstrate the dependence of their ability to self-preserve on the weakness of the authoritarian regime, which is unable to build an effective bureaucracy, manage budget deficits, ensure full control over local authorities and monopoly control over the media.¹¹⁸ The elections to the State Duma of Russia also demonstrated that with the coming to power of an authoritarian leader, a one-party system of government is actually established. In this regard, Moraski¹¹⁹ added that in authoritarian systems, competition between candidates for high political office is resolved even by extra-constitutional means.

Another illustrative example of the establishment of democratic values and the rollback of autocracy is the degree of sustainability of CSOs. In Ukraine, this level was greater even in peacetime, averaging 3.5 points until 2014, according to reports by the US Agency for International Development. However, Pietrzyk-Reeves¹²⁰ noted that Russia, despite its consolidated autocracy, demonstrates a stronger level of civic participation than Ukraine. This was also reported by Mazepus et al.,¹²¹ who noted that ties between Ukrainian and Russian CSOs have largely collapsed since Russia's annexation of Crimea, and some of the leaders of Russian CSOs have even emigrated to Russia or joined separatist groups. Despite Ukraine's successes in a series of global rankings, there are also problems other than the war that prevent it from embarking on a path of sustainable development. For instance, according to Umland,¹²² the rule of law and the propensity for corruption still do not allow for the creation of a legal and business environment for foreign companies.

118 S. LEVITSKY, L. A. WAY, *Democracy's surprising resilience*, in *Journal of Democracy*, 2023, 34(4), pp. 5–20.

119 B. MORASKI, *Response to Jessica Pisano's review of party politics in Russia and Ukraine: Electoral system change in diverging regimes*, in *Perspectives on Politics*, 2023, 21(2), p. 687.

120 D. PIETRZYK-REEVES, *Rethinking theoretical approaches to civil society in Central and Eastern Europe: Toward a dynamic approach*, in *East European Politics and Societies*, 2022, 36(4), pp. 1335–1354.

121 H. MAZEPUS, A. DIMITROVA, M. FREAR, T. CHULITSKAYA, O. KEUDEL, N. ONOPRIYCHUK, N. RABAVA, *Civil society and external actors: how linkages with the EU and Russia interact with socio-political orders in Belarus and Ukraine*, in *East European Politics*, 2021, 37(1), pp. 43–64.

122 A. UMLAND, *How the west can help Ukraine: Three strategies for achieving a Ukrainian victory and rebirth*, in *Portuguese Journal of Political Science*, 2023, 19, pp. 85–98.

Thus, comparing the results of the present study with the findings of a series of researchers helped to understand the trends and state of Ukrainian democracy and aspects of authoritarianism in Russia. Specifically, the statements regarding the partial ineffectiveness of the colour revolutions were significant for complementing the findings of the present study, as a few years later the regime in the country again began to be characterised by semi-democratic features. Furthermore, despite the democratic achievements in Ukraine, the problem of rampant corruption does not allow for the creation of a favourable business environment in the country.

5. Conclusions

The study demonstrated the difference in the transformation of political rights and civil liberties in Ukraine and Russia. The period of 1990 and early 2000 did not have substantial differences in both countries. However, starting around the 2003 parliamentary elections in Russia, where the United Russia party won a majority of seats in the Duma, and the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the situation has undergone dramatic changes. Consequently, according to the Freedom House ratings, Ukraine began to be positioned as a free country, while Russia, on the contrary, moved from neutral to non-free status. The impact of these events has gradually established Ukraine as a state committed to democratic values, while Russia has been in an authoritarian retreat for many years.

It was thoroughly investigated that the percentage of Ukrainians and Russians for whom commitment to democracy is a vital component in the context of state development is radically different. According to the latest World Values Survey, these figures are 43% and 23%, respectively. However, it is worth considering Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the KIIS poll, when almost 60% of Ukrainians considered it necessary to have a democratic system in the country. As for the Russians, as many as 66% as of the first half of 2024 would vote for the current president in the upcoming elections. Thus, Ukrainian society has demonstrated a significant major increase in support for democratic ideals, while in Russia, the level of support for democracy stayed low, which underscores the fundamental differences in the political orientations of Ukrainian and

Russian societies.

In addition to the above, it was proved that one of the aspects of democratic development of a state is not only the presence of CSOs, but also a great level of their sustainability in terms of the legal environment, advocacy, public image, etc. Accordingly, from 2005 to 2014, Ukrainian and Russian CSOs did not differ substantially, although Ukrainian CSOs were more resilient. However, with the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014, the resilience of Russian CSOs dropped to a historic 5.1 points, while Ukrainian CSOs are among the most resilient in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, second only to Polish CSOs. Accordingly, numerous repressive measures and narrowing of the space for civil society in Russia further contributed to the authoritarian breakdown in the country, while Ukrainian CSOs became one of the key players in promoting democratic reforms, values, and ideals. Apart from the above, the role of charity and volunteering in Ukraine has greatly increased, ranking 103rd in 2014 and 7th in 2024 according to the Charities Aid Foundation. However, in this context, volunteering and charity in Russia has also improved, suggesting that Russian society can be mobilised to support the country's aggressive ambitions.

The limitations of this study included the possible subjectivity of sociological surveys and limited access to verified information due to state control and censorship in Russia. Future research on this subject could focus on the role of CSOs as a force in building Ukraine's European integration course. Furthermore, historical aspects of the development of ideological aspects of authoritarianism in Russian society may be vital to consider.